

*Mystery
of
Dao [道]*

Art Aeon

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Mystery of Dao [道] (2020)*

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Dedicated to

Laozi [老子]
(6th-5th century BCE)

and

Zhuang Zhou [莊周]
(c.369 – c.286 BCE)

Synopsis

Mystery of Dao [道] is a narrative poem in the tercet stanza. It unfolds a private, personal tale of a conscientious wayfarer who tries to find possible relevance of the ancient Chinese books of wisdom on the mysterious and esoteric Dao [道] in the mundane journey of our workaday life.

The tale has two parts:

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook* is a simple fable in which a man converses with a brook. It was inspired by **Dao De Jing** [道德經]—attributed to the legendary Old Sage: **Lao Zi** [老子] (6th-5th Century BCE).

Song 2: *Fables of a Dreaming Butterfly* is a fable in which the ancient Chinese sage, Zhuang Zhou, transformed as a dreaming butterfly, converses with a rose. It was inspired by the *Inner Chapters* of **Zhuangzi** [莊子]—attributed to Zhuang Zhou [莊周] (c.369 – c.286 BCE).

Song 1

Inner Voice of a Brook:

Homage to Laozi [老子]

Song 1: Inner Voice of a Brook

*From a frozen still lake,
a pristine brook flows. A humble
wayfarer stops by to repose in peace.* 3

*The gentle murmur of
the brook cheers up his weary heart,
struggling for survival in this harsh world.* 6

*“O happy, peaceful brook,”
gently whispers the meek man, “how
I wish to flow carefree like you through life!”* 9

*Strangely he seems to hear
a deep voice, subtly resounding
from the brook: “Live simply free of care, pride,* 12

*and greed, like water flows
ever lower to reach the sea.”
“Who are you,” asks the man in astonishment,* 15

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

“speaking such deep wisdom?”
“I have no true name,” *says the voice*,
“but humans call me by various nicknames 18
as I do diverse things
without trying to do.” “What do
you do?” *asks the man in perplexity.* 21
“I always move from high
to low: flowing, falling, plunging,
meandering as they like to say about 24
my various movements,”
says the voice. “Water—that is what
you really are,” *says the man*, “even though 27
we use specific names
for different bodies that contain you:
Glacier, lake, river, sea, ocean, and so on.” 30

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

“How about clouds floating high
in the sky? Tiny raindrops, soft
snowflakes coming down to nourish the earth? 33
I undergo ceaseless,
reversible changes from pliable
water to formless vapour to solid ice, 36
yielding to everything
on the way, and yet achieving
all that I am to do by my nature.” 39
“Yes, I know,” *says the man*,
“what marvellous things you can do:
Hard huge rocks are crumbled by soft water; 42
Your enduring flows sculpt
colossal canyons and deep gorges;
Incessant sea-waves shape vibrant features 45

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

of ever-changing coasts.”

“I nurture,” *says the voice*, “every
living being; all life depends on me. 48

But I do not rule them;

I just serve them as their substance.”

“I know it as simple facts,” *says the man*, 51

“yet, I marvel at such deep

mysteries of your work; our bodies are
mostly made of water, flowing in and out 54

all the time to sustain

vibrant, vital throbs of living.

The seas and rivers are the primordial 57

mothers who beget life

since time immemorial,

and nurture all in marvellous dramas 60

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

through the evolution of life.
O modest spirit of water,
if you do not claim to be the very doer 63
of all your wondrous works,
who makes you to work in such ways?”
“I do not know,” *says the voice*, “what its true 66
ultimate reality is:
It is beyond what one can perceive
or grasp by human’s way of thinking in words. 69
But if you want, as humans
like to make up a word for every
thing real or imaginary, let us call it 72
‘Way,’ or ‘Dao’ as Old Sage
Laozi [老子] wrote twenty-five
centuries ago.” “I read his esoteric book, 75

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

Dao De Jing [道德經], ” *says*
the man, “but I could not grasp what
he meant by such terse, abstruse utterances 78
of sheer blatant paradoxes;
They perplexed my dull, timid mind.
Please teach me what *Dao* is.” “I do not know,” 81
says the voice, “how to teach it;
Every being, by its intrinsic
nature, comes from the ultimate reality, 84
say, ‘*IT*’ or Dao[道]; and it
always undergoes countless changes
in accord with the eternal flow of Dao[道]. 87
If one does not confine it
with vain words, it remains as pure,
unknowable, and ultimate origin of 90

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

the whole universe; if one
names it as *Dao*, then it becomes
the ultimate Mother who begets all things 93
that have been, exist now,
or to be. When one is bound by
selfish desire, he peeps mere its outer 96
fringe. But freed from desire,
one can see deep into its inner
essence. These are two distinct aspects of 99
Dao[道]. Yet, both are futile
attempts to grasp its deep mystery.”
“If so,” says *the man*, “isn’t *Dao* the same as 102
the Will of God?” “Tell me
who your *God* is and how his Will
works,” says *the voice*. “Humans have the innate 105

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

desire or necessity
to believe, I think,” *says the man*,
“that there must be an immortal deity—God 108
who has created all things,
and governs the universe by his
immutable providence: the ways of 111
God to all beings sanctified
by his Will.” “No one can own
Dao[道] as his will or power, be it *God* 114
or man,” *says the voice*,
“Dao[道] is the ultimate inner origin
from which everything comes into being, 117
and then returns to it:
Dao[道] is not a creator of things,
separate from things somewhere outside them. 120

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

Dao[道] is inherent in
every being. If ‘creating’ is
the business of your *God*, then who did 123
make such a *God* before
the latter could create all things,
out of what, and how, and why?” “God exists 126
everywhere all the time,”
says the man, “it is impossible
to think of making God by a greater One; 129
Hence, *ad infinitum*.”
“O, yes. That ‘*greater One*’ is humans!
Humans have been making up their *gods* 132
in their ever-changing
images all the time,” *says the voice*,
“since they evolved to speak on this planet. 135

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

They have been using their *gods*
as the most powerful mental tools
to organize their diverse societies, 138
and to govern their members.
Such creations of suitable *gods*
have been the critical necessity for 141
all human societies
to survive in harsh struggles for
existence.” “You expound the essential 144
nature of humans as social
animals,” *says the man*, “as I
cannot recall any human societies 147
without worshiping
their deities peculiar to them
with their characteristic personalities.” 150

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

“Hence, the human’s art,” *says*
the voice, “of making up their *gods*
has been crucial for their dominance.” 153

“Yes! But I fear,” *says the man*,
“that religions have also been misused
to bring dire miseries; in the magic names 156
of their subtle gods, sly
fanatic dictators have been
subjugating and enslaving others 159
in gory religious wars.
Vile, cruel despots misuse *gods*
as the most awesome magical weapons 162
to seize powers to suppress
others, to glut their greed for wealth,
and to inflame their bumptious pride for fame. 165

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

Many peoples are gravely ill
in the throes of deadly bigotry
of such inane fanatic delusions. 168

What could Daoism offer
to save mankind from religious wars?”
“I do not understand what you mean by 171

Daoism. Dao[道] is not something
that can be worshiped and supplicated
to fulfill human’s wishes as if it were a *god*. 174

What Laozi expounded for
all peoples was how to pursue
the right ways to see one’s inherent Dao[道], 177

and lead a good, simple,
and happy life by freeing oneself
from the bondage of desire, worry, and pride.” 180

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

“I see the nobility,”
says the man, “of his lofty ideals.
Yet how can a man, living as flesh and blood, 183
achieve such an ideal goal?”
“There is none who can help you,”
says the voice, “not even a *god*, but only you 186
to achieve it by yourself.”
“But didn’t Laozi reveal certain
esoteric precepts for humans to follow?” 189
asks the man in earnest.
“Yes. What he taught, however, is
neither esoteric nor magic like *divine words*; 192
They are plain, natural
things to do all the time without
trying to do such doing,” *says the voice*. 195

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

“Please teach me,” *pleads the man*,
“what those are.” “Be free in ever-
changing courses of this fleeting vibrant life,” 198
says the voice. “How can we
be free while we live?” *asks the man*.
“Don’t try to grasp any; let go everything;” 201
says the voice, “let your ‘I’
gently vanish into the void;
Merge with the immanent eternal Dao[道].” 204
“Your abstract teaching is,”
says the man, “too abstruse for me
to grasp; show concrete examples for me 207
to follow.” “Act properly;
Let go while amid avid actions.
Humbly yield to become whole; bend to be 210

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

straight; be empty to be
filled; let be torn to be renewed;
Don't try to count or measure what you do: 213
Simply do, while emptying
your mind into the deep, pure void!"
Thus speaks the wise voice to the pensive man. 216
"How could I grasp such profound
yet paradoxical precepts,"
asks the man, "and put them into actions 219
in this harsh-real living?"
"There is nothing that can be grasped,"
says the voice, "nor anyone who is to grasp, 222
in reality. One must
abandon his pride of paltry learning
of uncertain affairs of this changing world: 225

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

It blinds him with arrogance.
One must trust his spontaneous,
keen and innate intuition in his pure mind. 228

One must accept the world
as natural as it is, without
trying to figure out the unknowable 231

all in vain; and one must
refrain from prattling selfish,
absurd arguments in dangerous glib fibs.” 234

“What do you mean?” *asks the man.*
“All those cunning makers of *gods*—
they spell out their bumptious fanatic desires 237

into so-called *divine*
scriptures,” *says the voice,* “disguised
as if they were true words of their conjured 240

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

gods to enthrall peoples.”

“Then Laozi must be,” *says the man*,

“one of those clever makers of gods: I 243

heard that many people had

worshiped Laozi as the immortal

God of Daoism.” “Laozi has been utterly 246

misunderstood by many

ignorant peoples,” *says the voice*,

“as if he were a divinely inspired 249

prophet of a new *god*,

named *Dao*; they betrayed Laozi’s true

spirit, much worse than crucifying his body! 252

The fools indulge in playing

a tragic farce out of his life.”

“Tell me what you know of the mystic man, 255

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

Laozi,” *says the man*,
“as I wish to sing of his agony
as well as ecstasy of flowing in Dao[道].” 258
“Little I know of him,
besides what he spoke of himself;”
says the voice, “Laozi was not his real name. 261
He lived as if he were
a worthless waif, a do-nothing,
dejected, and forlorn from man’s society. 264
He owned nothing, ever
adrift in desolation, nowhere
to dwell. Yet, he was happy being free 267
from desire, pride, thus fear.
He had neither wealth nor fame to worry
in keeping; no learning to confuse himself 270

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

in vain pride; no success
in human's affairs to breed more greed
to ruin himself; he had no *god* to supplicate 273
for his selfish desires,
enslaving himself in fanatic
bigotry. He lived freely, breathing in 276
Dao[道], as if flying through
the mystic, cosmic breath like the wind."
"How did he attain such a perfect freedom," 279
asks the man, "while he was
still alive?" "By letting desires go,"
says the voice, "and holding to simple peace 282
in equanimity.
He realized that all beings, having
arisen and flourished, return to their source 285

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

in the grand cosmic drama.
Knowing one's natural return
to whence one has come from is to attain 288
simple peace in pure bliss.
Attaining pure peace in an empty mind
leads to accept the course of life as it flows. 291
Those who let the life flow
naturally like water flows
truly know that they need no external help: 294
They have no fear of losing;
They feel no envy of craving;
They need no divine power or mercy 297
to entreat with magic.
Accepting one's destiny
as the way of nature is to see eternity. 300

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

Seeing eternity
leads to the inner awakening.
The awakened breathes in the boundless, formless 303
Dao[道] through eternity.”
“Please teach me concrete ways,” *says the man*,
“one must pursue to reach such a mystic realm 306
of inner awakening.”
“Look beyond what you see; it will
lead you to the unseen. Listen beyond 309
what you hear; it will lead
you to the abstruse. Grasp beyond
what you hold; it will lead you to the subtle. 312
It is impossible
to argue about these mystic things
in words as they are beyond the scope of 315

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

meaningless arguments.

And yet, these ineffable things

form the ultimate unity of nature: 318

The unfathomable brings forth

all beings, and brings them back

to the pure void in time: Dao[道] is deeply 321

mysterious, subtle,

and elusive, yet it manifests

its intrinsic form in every being. 324

Dao[道] is a formless form,

a true image of nothingness:

It has no front to meet, no back to follow. 327

Dao[道] is fathomless, yet

it substantiates its essence

in every being. Whoever inheres 330

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

in the ultimate Dao[道]
is the master of every moment
of being. Whoever sees the ultimate 333
origin of all beings
knows how the true way of life flows
ever-freely in blissful harmony 336
with nature—our gracious
eternal Mother.” *Elated in*
awe and wonder, the man humbly confesses: 339
“Your noble teachings are
beyond my direct comprehension.
And yet, they move me deeply to breathe in 342
mysterious vital breath,
inspiring strange, mystic, inner
awakening.” “Laozi said that the wise do not 345

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

 speak of Dao[道],” *says the voice,*
“as they know that it cannot be
expounded by meaningless vain human speech. 348
 Only the fools indulge
in prattling inane glib fibs because
they do not know what they are babbling 351
 as I have been doing
to you right now. Anyway, I am
glad that you might get something out of it. 354
 It is time to resume
my flow to the sea. Fare safely in
your voyage over mystic sea of being.” 357
 “O noble sage of deep
sublime wisdom, before you leave,”
says the man, “show me how I should sail safe 360

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

across vast deep sea of being.”
“Keep yourself to be true,” *says the voice*,
“in what you think, speak, and act; be honest, 363
just, and fair in your doing.
Choose a good ground to settle in.
Find an abysm to purify your mind. 366
Seek good people to learn
the true virtuous ways of life.
Be willing and faithful to serve others. 369
A wise man acts without
forcing; a good ruler governs
without imposing; a sage puts himself 372
behind others, yet he
ends up ahead of all. One who can
act selflessly realizes his own true self. 375

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

One who regards others
as lively parts of his own body
may be trusted to govern people wisely. 378

Choose the proper time
for each action; resolve intrigues.
Blunt sharp edges; balance hostile opposites 381
into good harmony.

Merge humbly with the mundane world
to become harmonious with mother nature. 384

Whoever keeps on such
a way of life fulfills the noblest
task for eternity. Farewell, my fellow 387
wayfarer. Let your mind

breathe in timeless immanent Dao[道]!”
“O noble sage, reveal to me who you are 390

Song 1: *Inner Voice of a Brook*

in truth, so that I may
sing of you deep from my heart and soul.
Are you not the noble spirit of Laozi?" 393
asks the man to the deep
esoteric voice. "I am nothing
but the simple, ubiquitous substance, 396
you call water," *says the voice,*
"I flow ever freely through formless
immanent Dao[道] in humble, simple peace." 399
The mystic voice resumes
its natural flow, fading away
gently into the fathomless beyond. 402
Subtle rays of the sunset
pervade the deep, still, snow-clad woods.
By the pristine clear brook, the man muses rapt 405

Song 1: Inner Voice of a Brook

in a deep meditation.

The wise voice of water resounds

in his mind, inspiring mysterious

408

inner awakening;

He feels free from desire, worry, and

pride, humbly merging with the world in peace.

411

He lives in the inner realm,

inherent in the sea of being,

flowing freely in deep immanent Dao[道].

414

Song 2

Fables of a Dreaming Butterfly:

Homage to Zhuangzi [莊子]

Song 2: Dreaming Butterfly

*On a pleasant balmy summer afternoon,
I was reading the Inner Chapters
of Zhuangzi [莊子]— in my small 3
cozy garden. Pure exquisite fragrances
from delicate, graceful rosebuds
gently pervaded my heart. 6*

*The abstruse fables in Zhuangzi enchanted
my mind to wander freely
in wondrous imaginations. 9*

*Gradually, I fell asleep into a dream:
A charming butterfly wafts free
in an exotic garden. 12*

*It gently alights on a tender rosebud and
says, “I am a man, named Zhuang Zhou;
But I dream that I am 15*

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

a butterfly; I am happy flying
about carefree wherever I want
and enjoying myself 18
as a butterfly.” “Stop such nonsense!
You are a real butterfly,” *says*
the rose, “not a wily man 21
daydreaming!” “It may appear to you so,
now, but I am, indeed, the man.”
“How can you know,” *asks the rose*, 24
“that you are not a clever butterfly
who dreams that it is a wise man?”
“I am, in fact, the very man 27
who had imagined the fantastic fables
in *Zhuangzi* that have fascinated
you,” *says the butterfly*. 30

Song 2: Dreaming Butterfly

“If so, why did you make up such fables?”
asks the rose. “To teach all beings,”
says the butterfly, “how to 33
harmonize diverse things and conflicting
opinions by virtue of Dao[道].”
“What? Show me how you teach,” 36
says the rose. “Listen! Here is the first fable:
“*Afar in the barren north, there lives*
a giant fish, called Kun, 39
in the dark sea. When it changes into a bird,
now called Peng, its huge wings look like
vast clouds filling the sky. 42
Soaring up miles high, Peng flies to the south
without rest for many years till it lands
on the Lake of Heaven. 45

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

A small cicada laughs at Peng, saying,
““Isn’t my proper flying among bushes
perfect? What are you up to, 48
Peng, flying such a vast distance for so
long a time?”” *Thus, little creatures*
cannot know the great one, 51
nor a brief life an eternity.”’ Can you
grasp the meaning of this fable?”
asks the butterfly. “It sounds 54
so high-flying,” says the rose, “but it means
very little to me.” “Ah poor rose,
neither can you fly high 57
nor understand Dao[道],” says the butterfly.
“Show me what Dao is,” says the rose,
“if you really know it.” 60

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

“Dao[道] is the way; one learns it by walking
on it. Humans name things by their whims.
Beyond such name, each thing 63
has its intrinsic nature and its unique
function. Yet all different things
turn out to be one in Dao[道].” 66

“What do you intend to mean?” *asks the rose.*
“If we look beyond mere appearances,
we see this ultimate 69
oneness of all things; then, we have no use
of petty differentiation.
Hence, the sage dwells freely 72
in the equality of all things; being
equanimous is to realize
one’s true nature; one lives 75

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

in perfect freedom and pure happiness,
inhering deep in immanent Dao[道].”

“You are a paltry insect,” 78

says the rose, “yet, you talk as if you were
the grandmaster of the universe.”

“I’m not a dumb insect,” 81

says the butterfly, “but a man of Dao[道],
called Zhuang Zhou.” “How can it be so
as you claim?” *asks the rose* 84

in bewilderment. “Zhuang Zhou, the man,
and this butterfly are not two
different things, but equal 87

harmonious one in Dao[道]; the apparent
distinction,” *says the butterfly*,
“between the two is nothing 90

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

but an example of the mysterious
incessant transformations of
everything in nature.” 93

“How do you know that what you insist is
true? It sounds to me,” *says the rose*,
“just paradoxical 96

humours you make up to tease a poor rose.”
“One can only know things through knowing
oneself. *This* or *that* gives birth 99

to each other,” *says the butterfly*, “there is
right because of *wrong*: each thing has
elements of *right* and *wrong*. 102

When there is no further discrimination
between *right* and *wrong*, it is called
the very still-point of Dao[道]. 105

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

At the still-point in the centers of circles,
we can see the infinity in all things.
We should seek the truth 108
beyond *right* or *wrong*.” “If what you say is
neither true nor false but beyond both,”
asks the rose, “what am I 111
to make of it?” “I don’t really know what
you will think. Suppose we argue:
If I win and you lose, 114
am I really right and you wrong? If *right*
can be absolutely right,” *says*
the butterfly, “there need 117
be no arguments about how it should be
different from *wrong*. But who can
know it absolutely? 120

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

Nobody does!" "You must know it," *says the rose,*
"if you are the wise man of *Dao*,
Zhuang Zhou, as you have avowed. 123

There is, I believe, the omniscient being
who knows everything absolutely
as he has created all things 126

since the beginning of the whole universe."
"Who is such an all-knowing one?"
asks the butterfly 129

in great excitement. "Do you not know of God?"
says the rose in a solemn tone. "I know
what people have pretended 132

to know that is impossible for them
to know at all," *says the butterfly*
beaming a thoughtful smile. 135

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

“What do you mean? Do you not believe that
there exists God who has created
this world since the beginning 138
of time?” *asks the rose*. “I don’t understand
what people mean by ‘*beginning*’:
If there were a ‘*beginning*’ 141
of time, there should be a ‘*not-yet-beginning*’
to become the ‘beginning;’ if so,
there should be another 144
‘*a-not-yet-beginning*’ to the ‘*not-yet-*
beginning’ to be the ‘*beginning*,’
and so forth. Hence there are, 147
indeed, infinite possible ‘*beginnings*.’
When people speak of an origin,
it is impossible 150

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

for me to understand what they refer to,”
says the butterfly. “Yes, I see
what you are pointing to,” 153
says the rose. “Well then,” *says the butterfly*,
“how about the maker? If your *God*
is the original maker 156
of everything, who did make such a *God*
so that he could make all other things
except his maker 159
and himself? We can repeat endlessly
the meaningless void question: *Who*
did create all things 162
in the beginning?” “But why do you think that
there should be such a Maker of God?
I believe that God exists 165

Dreaming Butterfly

ever in himself; God cannot be made
by another maker,” *says the rose.*
“Well, how do you know that 168
what you believe is true?” *asks the butterfly.*
“Can you prove that it is false?” *says*
the rose. “Why there should be 171
an original maker of everything?
It is humans that make up such
makers in their fanciful whims, 174
as if they were the ultimate Maker.
But in truth, everything exists
in itself by its own 177
nature, without being made by *God*, just as
God cannot be made by a maker
as you have firmly avowed,” 180

Song 2: *Dreaming Butterfly*

says the butterfly. “If God were nothing
but our wishful imagination,”
says the rose, “how could the world 183
be sustained in order, not falling apart
in utter chaos?” “Everything flows
harmoniously in Dao[道] 186
by its intrinsic nature, not by enforced
ruling from the outside such as
your *God*, or other deities,” 189
says the butterfly. “You believe that *Dao*
is the ultimate cause, don’t you?”
“Yes, I do,” *says the butterfly.* 192
“Then what is the real difference, if any,
between your *Dao* and my God, except
that we give different 195

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names arbitrarily?” *says the rose*. “There are
profound differences,” *says the butterfly*,
“between the two concepts: 198
God is the almighty character, portrayed
in grand dramas or fantastic
fables with human-like 201
personality; first of all, *God* is
assumed to be able to use
human language: He makes 204
divine decrees with words; he listens to
what humans pray to him for his help
with his supernatural 207
power. In contrast, Dao[道] is an abstract
principle or law of nature:
Dao[道] cannot be reified 210

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as a concrete thing with certain quality
or personality; it is not
a character who can 213
hear and speak to humans his will. Dao[道] is
ineffable as it inheres
in itself beyond words. 216
Hence, their practical differences for humans
are, indeed, unimaginable:
God, portrayed as the almighty 219
character, has played the most powerful
and effective role in ruling
peoples by their kings, priests, 222
and other religious leaders. *Gods* have
always been worshiped by peoples
in various modes of their 225

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particular cultural traditions
throughout the whole history
of humankind. In contrast, 228
 Dao[道] has been the arcane esoteric
topic of philosophical
meditation for inner 231
 awakening of a few rare individuals
hidden in simple privacy.
Hence, Dao has been ignored 234
 by rulers as useless speculations
of wandering do-nothing waifs.”
“If so, what could *Dao* do 237
 for creatures struggling for survival?
As for God, we believe that He
sustains and protects us 240

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to relish this life. Furthermore, God has
the supernatural power
to resurrect us from death 243
to enjoy a new life in His kingdom
for eternity, if we obey
faithfully His commands. 246

What do you expect that *Dao* could do
for you after this fleeting life?” “Nothing!”
says the butterfly, beaming 249
subtle smiles. “Nothing? Do you not hope for
a new life after death?” *asks the rose.*

“Tell me what such a life 252
beyond death would be; I am aware that all
creatures,” *says the butterfly*, “strive
to avoid death as long as 255

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they can.” “But all living creatures are bound
to die;” *says the rose in a grave tone,*
“Their dead bodies will crumble 258
into dust. Yet, I believe, their souls will
survive even after death.” “What is *soul*?”
asks the butterfly. 261
“It is something like a part of God
in each creature; its soul cannot be
directly perceived since 264
soul is not a physical thing like its body,”
says the rose. “How do you know that
each creature has its 267
unique characteristic *soul*,” *asks the butterfly,*
“as it has its individual body?”
“I cannot show you what 270

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soul is. Yet, it is my soul that makes me
speak to you about the deep mystery
of soul, right now,” *says the rose.* 273

*After thoughtful contemplations in deep
silence, the butterfly resumes
the dialogue:* “I think that 276

it is your mind which enables you to think,
remember past events, reason
logically, imagine 279

possible events or even impossible,
and converse about them with me now.
Isn’t your *soul* exactly 282

the same thing as the mind?” “What do you mean
by *mind*?” *asks the rose.* “The mind of
each creature is the conscious 285

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functions of its brain. We cannot directly
perceive the actual processes
of our versatile, abstract, 288
and complex consciousness, but we can infer
them from their manifestations
in our overt behaviours 291
such as expressing what we perceive now,
what we remember from the past,
and what we can imagine 294
by speaking, or other intentional acts,”
says the butterfly. “How do you
know that it is our brain 297
which enables us to perform such wondrous
mental activities?” *asks the rose*.
“I learnt from proficient 300

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physicians who cared for injured soldiers,”
says the butterfly, “that specific
damage of distinct parts 303
of the brain inside the head results in
malfunction of particular mode
of mental activities.” 306
“Can you tell me concrete examples,” *says*
the rose with great curiosity,
“of such sad incidents?” 309
“An injury of a specific region
of the brain impairs the ability
of using language,” *says* 312
the butterfly, “to express one’s feelings
and thoughts; that of another region
impairs the comprehension 315

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of one's native language as if it were
meaningless streams of foreign sounds."

"If so, it is our brain 318

that speaks what it thinks and understands from
what it hears, isn't it? Then what is 'I,'
or one's self?" *asks the rose.* 321

"The awareness of *one's self* must depend on
sound healthy brain functions; damages to
various regions of 324

the brain result in devastating losses
of memories; for such patients

'I' exists only moment 327

to moment of 'now,' without any remembrance
of *one's self* continuing to
exist from the past," *says* 330

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the butterfly. “Then, even the flow of time
depends on our brain, don’t you think?”
says the rose. “Our awareness 333
of the time’s flow,” *says the butterfly*, “must
be the function of our healthy brain.
I saw a brave general 336
who lost all his senses and self-awareness
after he had suffered severe
brain injuries, all the while 339
his body kept on living like an inert
vegetable for many years. Certain
poisons affect the brain 342
such that decent persons become helplessly
mad lunatics after being poisoned.
Indeed, the versatile 345

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mysterious functions of our delicate brains
determine who we are; when
it is healthy, we are sane; 348

 If it suffers certain disorders, we
become crazy. Even during
the normal daily cycle 351

 of wakefulness and sleep, when we become
asleep, we cannot perceive nor know
anything real, but our busy 354

 brain actively conjures up fanciful
phantoms in odd dreams.” “If *mind* is
such mystic functions of 357

 the brain,” *says the rose*, “then it must perish
at death. Hence, the *mind* is mortal: it
cannot be the same as 360

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the immortal soul.” “How do you know that
there exists in you such a *soul*
which you believe to be 363
immortal?” *asks the butterfly*. “I cannot
prove it for you, but I believe that
the soul always lives, never 366
to die as the body does,” *says the rose*. “Then what
does happen to the *soul* when one
dies?” *asks the butterfly*. 369
“I heard that death brings forth separation
of the soul from the body,” *says the rose*
in a sad mood. “If so, then death 372
must be the best of all blessings that will
free one’s *soul* from its bondage to
the body, don’t you agree?” 375

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says the butterfly. “Yes, we should, if it
is true. But I fear death,” *says the rose.*
“What do you know of death 378
that makes you fear it?” *asks the butterfly.*
“I don’t know for sure, but I fear
that it may be like endless 381
terrible nightmares from which no one has
ever awoken,” *says the rose.* “The dead
cannot dream at all; only 384
living beings have dreams,” *says the butterfly,*
“while they sleep. We cannot make up
a dream at our will; when 387
we dream, we don’t know that we are dreaming.
We interpret the dream as if
it were real, while we are 390

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dreaming; only after we have awoken
from it, we realize that it was a dream.
In reality, you are not 393
a rose but a man who dreams that he happens
to be a rose in his dreaming,”
says the butterfly. “If 396
I am a man, then who am I?” *asks the rose*.
“I don’t know how you came to be
nor what you do in your life. 399
But I think that you are a wondrous dreamer,”
says the butterfly, “wandering
freely in your imaginations.” 402
“If I am such a sensible man,” *says*
the rose, “please teach me the common
destiny of all beings, 405

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so that I shall follow it without fears.”
“We all have come from the mystic
womb of our Mother Nature 408
at our birth; in time, we shall return to her
bosom at our death. Bare naked we
came here; with empty hands 411
we shall return to her naturally.
This is the true, intrinsic way
of life—every being 414
flows in harmony with its inherent Dao[道].
Human’s keen awareness of dying
and their innate fear of 417
inevitable death makes it necessary,
I think, for them to create *gods*
in their minds to worship, 420

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and to believe in their individual *souls*
that are supposed to transcend
their births and deaths,” *says* 423
the butterfly. “You awake me to realize
that I have been dreaming in false
fantastic delusions 426
of unreal *God* and immortality
of fictional *soul*,” *says the rose*.
“Between your belief in *God* 429
and your *soul* and what I spoke of them,
I don’t know which one is true
absolutely. I have 432
just said something, but I cannot be sure
whether what I have said has something
truly meaningful or 435

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just an empty nonsense,” *says the butterfly*.
“Why do you say so? You confuse me,”
says the rose. “For any argument 438
to be valid, there must be something valid
beyond the argument; when we come
to a point beyond the reach 441
of our knowledge,” *says the butterfly*, “we must
confess our ignorance. Knowing
enough to stop arguing 444
about what one doesn’t know is the right
thing to do. Who can argue anything
without using language? 447
But how could one argue about *God* or *Dao*
that cannot be expressed in language?”
“Then, is *Dao* utterly 450

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unknowable?” *asks the rose*. “How can you
know that what I say I know may not
be what I don’t know?” 453

“I trust that you are, indeed, a wise man,”
says the rose, “not a glib cunning
butterfly deceiving 456

a dumb rose with such enchanting wise words.
Be an honest and kind teacher
for me to grasp Dao.” “Nobody 459

can teach Dao[道] to anybody. If one
is true to oneself and follows
one’s nature, why would 462

one need a teacher?” *says the butterfly*.
“But how could I be true to myself?”
asks the rose. “Free yourself 465

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from pride and desire; let life flow by itself.
Don't discriminate *this* from *that*,
or *right* from *wrong*. Forget 468
the flow of time; just relish each moment
as if it is your eternity
in peace. Don't strive to win. 471
In simple harmony with nature, wander
freely into your inner realm
of pure imaginations!" 474
"Now, I see," says *the rose*, "why you dream that
you are a carefree butterfly,
wandering in fantastic 477
fables of your esoteric imaginations!"
"This is a moment of awakening:
You think that you've been awake, 480

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appearing to see, hear, and understand
things as they are, all the while
you have been dreaming, as if 483
you were a rose conversing with a butterfly.
But you who is listening to
my speaking, is dreaming; 486
And I who speak that you are dreaming is
also dreaming,” *says the butterfly*.
“Do you mean this is all 489
nothing but a mere dream? If so, what is
real? Who am I, talking thus, now,
to whom?” “You are a man, 492
dreaming of being a poet who makes up
dreams as if they were all real, and
real things as if they were 495

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fanciful dreams. Furthermore, I, Zhuang Zhou,
am merely a fleeting shadow
in your dream, all conjured up 498
by your imaginative mind!” *says the butterfly.*
“You—mystic butterfly breathing
in *Dao*—how could you be 501
a shadow in my dream?” *says the rose in awe.*
“I just fade away into the void
as you awake from your dream. 504
Farewell, dear good rose. Compose breathtaking
poems, not in empty words, but
with fresh, pure, inspiring 507
fragrances deep into your *soul!*” *Suddenly,*
I awoke from the wondrous dream. Then
I saw a butterfly, 510

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gently flying away from a rose in my garden.
Elated in deep awakening, I
wonder how it happened 513
for me to dream that I was a rose that
conversed with the butterfly, which
dreamt that it was Zhuang Zhou: 516
The sage who flows freely in timeless Dao[常道].

The End

Epilogue

The present work is a very short narrative poem on the abstruse and esoteric *Dao*[道]. It tries to explore the profound mystery of *Dao*[道] in two soul-searching fables:

Song 1: *Inner voice of a Brook*

Song 2: *Fables of a Dreaming Butterfly*

[A] Late in his journey of life, its author happened to come across the ancient Chinese books of wisdom: *Laozi Dao De Jing* [老子道德經] and Zhuangzi [莊子] in the following references:

- (1) Legge, James (1891). The Texts of Taoism: The Tao Te Ching of Lao Tzu; The Writings of Chuang Tzu. In: The Sacred Books of the East series, Edited by Max Muller. Oxford University Press/ Reprinted Dover Books (1962).
- (2) Chen, Man-jan (Translated from Chinese by Gibbs, T.C.) (1981). LAO-TZU: “My words are very easy to understand.” North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, Calif.

(3) Han, Young Duk (1983). 莊子.
(bilingual texts in Chinese and
Korean with extensive discussions
on the linguistic and historical
contexts in Korean).
Hong Shin Publication, Seoul, Korea.

(4) Choi, Jae Mok (2006). 老子.
(Bilingual texts in Chinese and
Korean with recent archaeological
findings of the ancient Chinese
texts, extensive comparisons among
various editions and commentaries by
ancient Chinese scholars and linguistic
difficulties, etc. in Korean).
Eulyoo Publication, Seoul, Korea
ISBN 89-324-5246-6 03150

[B] After perusing the original texts of *Laozi Dao De Jing* [老子道德經] and *Zhuangzi* [莊子] in Chinese script with the help of the scholars as cited in the references (1) – (4), the author realized that they were too abstruse and esoteric for him to comprehend.

[C] Strangely, however, some parts of the original texts began to resound in his mind. Eventually, they inspired him to pursue an inner journey into soul-searching fables:

Song 1: *Inner Voice of Brook* is a naïve fable of the imaginary conversation between a man (the author) and a brook (the part of 道德經 that resounds in his mind).

Song 2: *Fables of a Dreaming Butterfly* is directly inspired by Zhuangzi [莊子]; it invokes the ancient sage, Zhuang Zhou [莊周], to participate as the '*dreaming butterfly*' to converse with a *rose* (the author) about the mystery of Dao [道] and how to flow with it naturally in the present fable.

